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Economic Wasteland

Exodus: Black Zionism

The Myth of Bayard Rustin

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Vol 9 No 10 October 1969

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Cover design: Daniel H. Watts

Economic Wasteland

Harlem has arrived at last. Its white merchants are leaving, and its aging playboy spokesman from the island in the sun has made his annual pilgrimage, "home" to turn on his serfs with the usual cake slogans of Black Power and Down With Whitey. Unfortunately for us, however, this circus act of his cannot be entirely ignored, for while going through the motions of his boring routine* (the last angry negro), he has managed to cash in on every new aspect of Black misery. And because of his continual efforts to avoid jails and fines, the community has been deprived of even minimal Congressional patronage in the form of government-sponsored projects and jobs.

Harlem. Well, "our" friend above and all those other negro leaders, hands dripping with the stench of white guilt money, have at least been forced out into the open by the grim reality of what Harlem has become. Their empty phrases no longer have even the illusion of substance. And we who worked to build our own businesses, to put our own people to work, to drive the pushers of poison off the streets, and turn Harlem into an economically viable and socially acceptable community for people to work and live in, have seen much of our efforts simply go down the drain. For Harlem today has become an economic wasteland. Why? On the one hand, those in City Hall and in Albany seem quite willing to let the final dry rot of apathy take hold of the people. Few of the stores and buildings that were destroyed during the recent insurrections have been either rebuilt or replaced. Instead, city and state officials have opted to allow Harlem to drift into a no-man's land where junkies and muggers roam at will. And when the time is ripe, orders for the take-over (eminent domain) will be issued, then will come the give-a-way (urban renewal) all of which will make the infamous Teapot Dome scandal of 45 years ago look indeed like a tea party.

On the other hand, the verbal revolutionaries who were so instrumental in driving the white mercenaries and missionaries from Harlem are now caught up in their own rhetoric. They have never had any kind of meaningful program for the redevelopment of Harlem, so by default they are giving up and allowing the predator to take over what was once a thriving and beautiful community and turn it into a vast row of endless filing cases called high-rise apartment houses and office buildings with a few people thrown in as an afterthought. The name Harlem (to be changed to Central Park North) if remembered at all shall be buried in some archive... and we, its former citizens, shall again turn to doing what we seem to know best: weeping for what once was.

The Queen of Grenada, Spain, once told her tearful son after he had lost a battle: "Stop crying like a baby for what you were not man enough to defend."

--- DANIEL H. WATTS

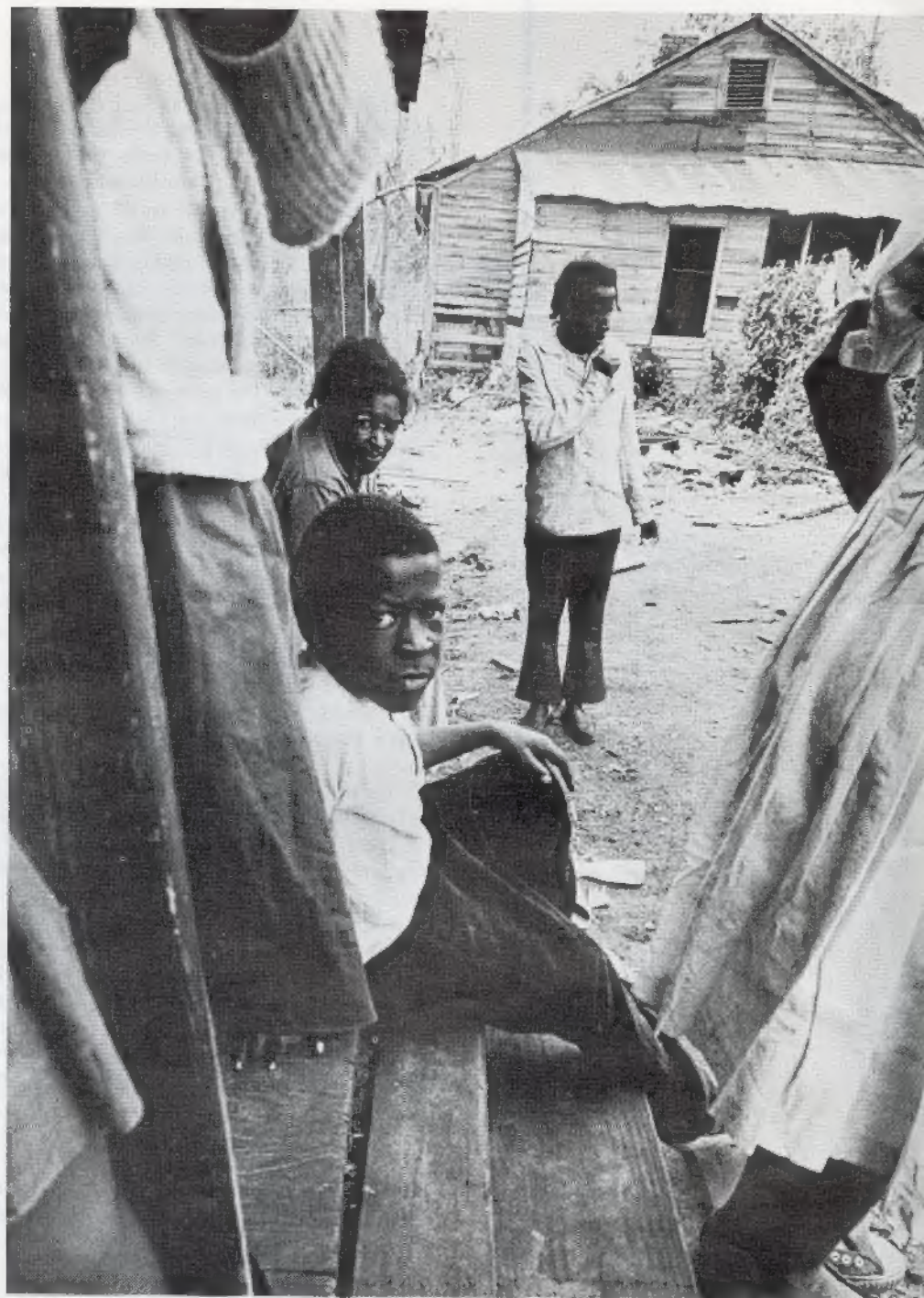
*He happens to be bored with it (and Harlem) himself. As he put it on a recent David Frost Show (N.Y.C. TV), "I just don't give a damn."



Daniel H. Watts

THE MYTH OF BAYARD RUSTIN

by Leonard Harris



Anthony Barboza

*Rustin, Bayard. "The Myth of the Black Revolt" (*Ebony*, August 1969). All quotations are from Mr. Rustin's article.

Mr. Harris is a graduate student in philosophy at Miami University, Ohio.

FLORIDA

"...there is little shared experience

I have long suspected that Bayard Rustin, once the "official" theoretician of the integrationist civil rights movement, would not be able to find his way out of the intellectual dead-end that that movement became. Well, there is no longer any doubt. Indisputable confirmation has come. In a recent special edition of *Ebony*

magazine, Rustin discusses what he terms the "myths" of the Black revolution, revealing in the process such a naive view of current events as to make one wonder if there actually is a *real* Bayard Rustin, living, breathing in these United States in these times.

Therefore, my reply to Mr. Rus-

tin (wherever he may be) and his "myths":

BLACK UNITY

Mr. Rustin states that "...blacks have no territorial focus for unity, and beyond that, there is little shared experience between rural and

cont next pg



HARLEM

Vance C. Allen

between rural and urban Negroes..." --B. Rustin

RUSTIN cont.

urban Negroes, as well as between Southern and Northern Negroes." Nationally, it is true that Blacks are diffused in different geographic communities. But in every locale Black people are concentrated, whether they live in big city or small-town ghettos, or second-class middle-class communities. There is interaction, too, between urban and rural Blacks, if only because the exodus of rural Blacks to urban ghettos is still an active process. Moreover, after extensive study and travel over the country, it has become clear to me that the shared experience of Blacks in oppression creates the almost universal ability to identify and consciously know our enemy. Both rural and urban Blacks know that they are oppressed and systematically denied economic advancement; both Northern and Southern Blacks are seeking new forms of political activism (note that mass integrationist marches have declined sharply in both the North and South).

In other words, Mr. Rustin, unity comes in different and sometimes subtle forms.

BLACK CAPITALISM

Mr. Rustin explains the dilemmas of Black capitalism on the one hand (although he doesn't condemn white capitalism) and then proposes an equally preposterous myth on the other. "But I can see how they (the poor Black men) will benefit by federal programs to reconstruct our cities, to provide full employment, a decent income and adequate health care for everybody, and to improve the quality of education in our schools...(this is the) fundamental solution to the social and economic problems of black Americans...." The federal government is based upon a capitalistic economy and political system of priorities which leaves the Black man expendable in either case. Why should the federal government want to reconstruct predominantly Black cities when it's

not, in their eyes, economically profitable due to the expenditures and lack of intellectual resources and market, and especially when these predominately Black cities can be sustained and left for self-destruction through a system of tokenism which relieves the government of useless surplus goods? Why should these fanatical and vain hopes have more validity now than they have proved to have had in the last 300 years or so?

REPARATIONS

"Demands of a purely racial nature cannot appeal to the white poor who have common interests with blacks." So? What good would the integration of poor whites with poor Blacks do? If every move the Black man makes must be in tune with the needs of poor whites (who are poor due to class conflicts and not racism), then the basic problem of racism will never be confronted, much less solved.

Mr. Rustin considers reparation and recoupment demands as impractical, reactionary, and as causes of white backlash. The logic is that because such demands are based on white guilt complexes and benevolence, which are not strong bargaining positions, they thereby produce white backlash. But integration is based on white guilt complexes, too, and thereby faces the same consequence, so why is Mr. Rustin for the one and not the other? And to consider the church an unjust target for reparation demands because it is nonpolitical is an error. What other American institution embodies so well all the basic norms which maintain racism as the church? And to be nonpolitical means to be political in a negative way.

BLACK STUDIES

"I am opposed to any program in black studies that separates the contribution of black men from the study of America...." Any Black Studies program is a particular type

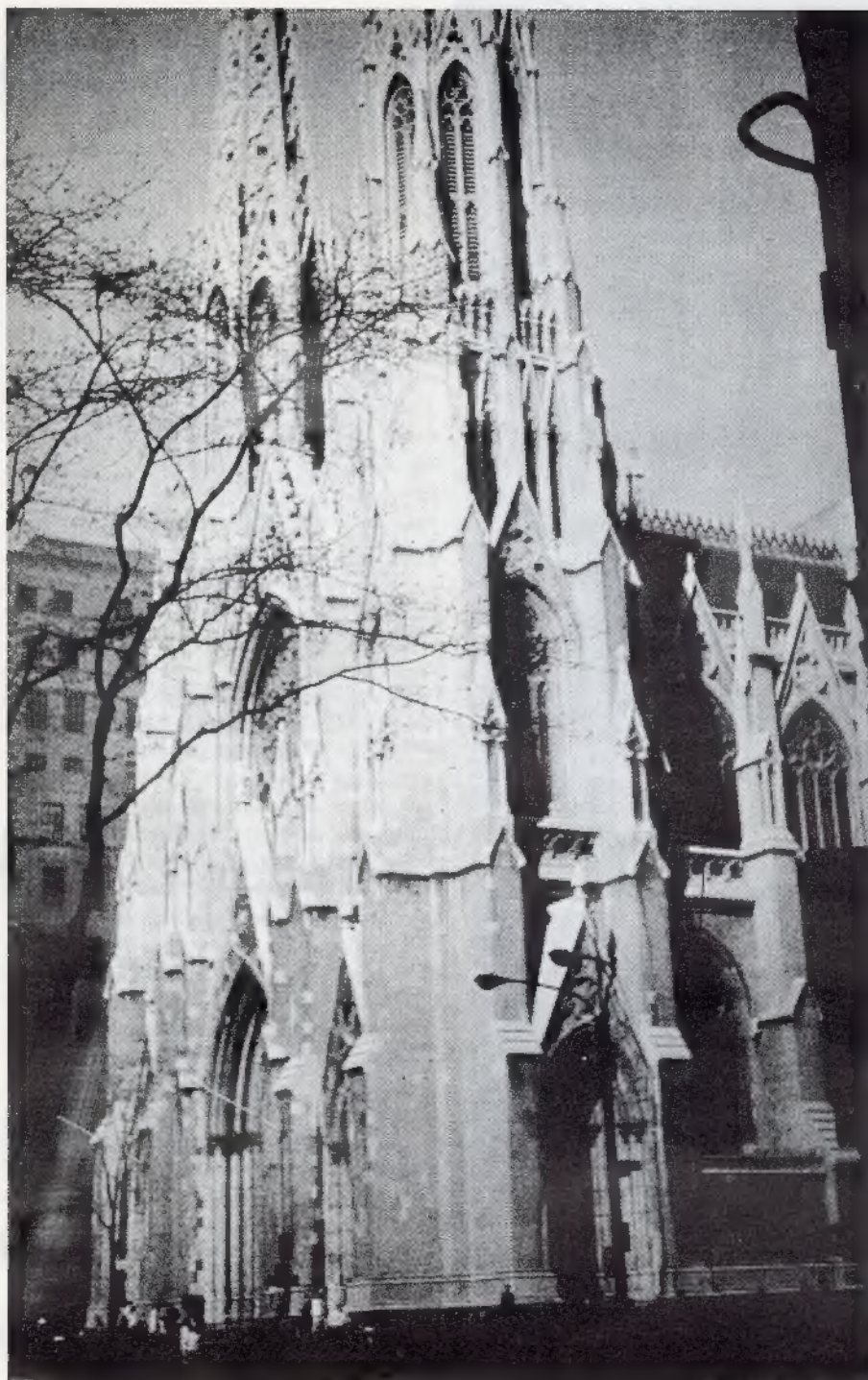
of study of American history and society -- i.e., "*I too am American.*" Moreover, the phrases, "contribution of black men... magnificent contributions of black men," along with the recurring fear of anything separate or nonwhite, are indicative of a colonial mentality trying to justify the race's equality as humans, deathly fearing white reprisals, and seeking white approval.

My only question for those profound critics of Black Study Institutes is: What existed *before* the present groping for some form of meaningful education?

VIOLENCE

First, violence is not a myth but a political reality which occurs daily and if used wisely can secure progressive results. Second, violence in the form of riots is over. Violence in the form of extortion is being practiced on an elementary level, and most elementary schools progress through high school in due time. Third, the assumption that "unjust means cannot lead to just ends" depends upon how you define "just." The oppressor's definition of "unjust" is anything which harms his profits and challenges established exploitative institutions. "Just" defined from the position of the oppressed is anything which produces better living conditions -- including violence. Violence has produced results in the last few years. Sit-ins, walk-ins, and preach-ins didn't put 461 Black elected officials in office; sporadic violence created the atmosphere which led to those elections.

"...the solution is not social warfare but full employment...construction of adequate housing for all... what is needed is the expansion of resources in order to reduce competition over what presently exists and to provide a secure existence for everybody." Nobody questions the *need* for full employment. Nobody questions the *need* for ade-



Daniel H. Watts

What other American institution embodies so well all the basic norms which maintain racism as the church?

quate housing. The question is over the *method* by which we can make these things a reality. To say that the "expansion of resources (will provide) a secure existence for everybody," is justification enough for a Black Studies Institute designed to *educate* potential Black activists, and exposes Mr. Rustin's unwarranted belief in a dead myth. Historically America has expanded its resources for the betterment of the ruling white capitalists (approximately 1.6% of the present population). Therefore, it is falacious to assume that by further expansion Black Americans will attain any more than the tokenism that has always been the pattern.

SEPARATION

Comment on this section of Rustin's article is extremely difficult because he doesn't identify the separatism he is talking about. Is it "nationalistic emigration separatism" such as espoused by the Republic of New Africa, "cultural revolutionary separatism," the "revolutionary nationalist separatism" of the Black Panthers, or the "Black Power separatism" of Charles V. Hamilton and Stokely Carmichael? Rustin does not care to say. Instead, he deals with the accomplishments of men who haven't preached separatism.

BLACK REVOLUTION

Every system attempts to perpetuate itself. In view of this ancient truism, why should one believe that America, one of the oldest and the most profitable repositories of racism, would willingly "radically re-fashion" its political economy? History doesn't attest to such benevolence in human nature.

"The Negro struggle for equality will continue until the kind of revolution I have described is achieved." I have yet to discover any revolutionary guidelines in Mr. Rustin's article. And in any case, such a complex problem as that of how to secure the Black man's freedom must surely demand more of a detailed study than this presented by Mr. Rustin.



Daniel H. Watts

The ghetto may become the true American Wilderness--
the first area in which Americans can not make a living.

Perhaps the most salient aspect of modern poverty is unemployment. Without the pride and dignity, as

well as the money, which comes from employment, subsistence on a physical or metaphysical basis has proven virtually impossible for the

Land Grants

William H. Banks, Jr.

great masses of the poor. But is the limited franchise of employment in itself the resolution to the situation of poverty? I think not.

The time and place of the greatest level of employment for Black people in the history of this country was in the pre-Emancipation South. The obvious point this brings to mind is that this was also the time and place of slavery in our country. The question of whether or not the labors of slavery were imposed does not minimize the fact that these labors were actually a way of obtaining a living.

To show the fallacy of the one-dimensional employment-oriented economy, let us make a slight historical hypothesis. Let us suppose that the Southern plantation owner had actually paid the Blacks whom they "owned," thereby making the Blacks *de facto* employees rather than slaves. Under such conditions the plantation owner could conceivably have made just as much money by simply charging the tenants rent and other fees for the bare necessities that he had "given" them under slavery. Therefore, we may conclude that even in a time of mass employment it is possible to have a depressed standard of economic life. We find moreover that poverty is the absence of general economic participation rather than simply a low level of employment.

Resident influence and interest in the economy is in part an answer to this situation -- i.e., more ownership by residents of the community. Does this, however, necessarily affect the value of the consumer's dollar? If, for instance, each ghetto business was owned and operated by a ghetto resident, would this be the

for Black Communities

answer? Apparently not. We can see this in the fact that many resident professionals such as doctors, lawyers, and funeral directors have had a negligible effect on ghetto poverty. All simple individual ownership would do, then, is enlarge the affluent and mobile class within the context of the poor community.

Although more and more employment opportunities may emerge both in and out of the ghetto, the key to price stability and therefore buying power is tied to the growth of the larger general economy, which is external to the ghetto.

It is the ghetto resident's disenfranchisement from the rapid and therefore inflationary growth of the general American economy that accounts for his poverty. Therefore, we must synthesize economic mechanisms which will supply the ghetto community with sufficient goods and services without the consequences of dollar-shrinking profit margins. These mechanisms should offer opportunity for ghetto employment as well as management.

The structure of these nonprofit community corporations would be basically that of franchise, management and employment. The incorporators of a given community corporation would apply to a community agency for the right to manage and operate a facility within the community.

There must, however, be a central coordinating structure for the purpose of franchising community corporations, controlling their revenue flow and surplus accumulations. These central coordinating bodies should also be augmented by sources of revenue other than those of the general ghetto market.

The revenue grant system is an extension of a much more familiar concept: the land grant. The land grant guaranteed institutions extraordinary sovereignty and prerogatives over the physical area of their endeavors. With the gift of the land came tax breaks, oil and mineral rights.

These particular rights and concessions were granted in the context of the early American settlers vs. the physical frontier -- i.e., they were meaningful. The same things would be little more than ceremonial amenities today for the ghetto communities. Reasonable interpretation and extension of the concept, though, shows us that what the grantees were actually given (and what ghetto residents must be given today) was the extraordinary privilege and means of retaining and redistributing the assets of their domain.

The instrument I propose is a Revenue Grant Community Foundation. It would primarily be a legislative creation of municipalities for communities. It would mean both the delegation of certain municipal functions to the neighborhood and the creation of others. In some ways the foundation would be similar to the Community Chest of the United Fund. The foundation would be funded by such things as franchise fees, tax-exempt donations, and community tax-sharing of municipal taxes as well as state and federal taxes levied within the community. A community foundation would also have the right to sell bond issues which could be guaranteed by the federal government in much the same way as many municipalities now finance many of their projects. The trustees of community foundations

could contract professional fund managers to invest surplus community foundation funds outside of the community.

These are but a few of the functions which a Revenue Grant Community Foundation could carry out. Others include such banking functions as holding residents' deposits as a savings bank does, and granting special low interest loans to ghetto residents. A Revenue Grant Foundation would be solely an instrument of economic stability in the communities. Its revenues would be used only to offset cost of living increases within the community, and it would not take upon itself such municipal functions as road building or sanitation maintenance.

The most obvious economic ramification of this system would be a decrease in the municipal, state and federal tax revenues. However, I view this restructuring as a way of channeling what would be welfare and poverty program funds (as well as whatever investment surplus would be derived from the system) into meaningful economic benefits in the forms of price stability and ghetto dollar value.

Today the ghetto dweller faces a complex technical/economic environment rather than the classical natural environment which opposed early American settlers. If he does not become properly equipped to face it, the poverty ghetto will become the true American Wilderness, the first area in which Americans can not make a living. If, however, we can prepare him with structures like that of Revenue Grant Community Foundation, the poverty ghetto will be the next and yet the greatest American Frontier.

Wet Dream No. 5

If I could go home again...

i wouldn't

Knowing they'd rip me right off

cause i
don't split
infinitives

or Drop my
g's ?you know)

Uncle Fred and Big Momma
sold everything

(right? Except their bodies
which they didn't own

(?right So I could go find a way
to own mine and

To come back running
the store on 61st

Hell

Them mothers
burned the place down

... I *can't* go home again

--- Norris Brock Johnson

FOR CHARLENE After the set.

After the warm spill

Into her mellow blackness

And knowing her soft

Rhythm and tight release

I lay at ease

Feeling the tension

Drained and smoking a

Cigarette

Until she started

Yapping in her slow

Sorghum voice about

Her other men,

Especially whitey.

How boss she

Was.

Suddenly I felt

Nothing had happened,

Except work.

Man, was I

Tired.

---Zack Gilbert.

Photo Essay



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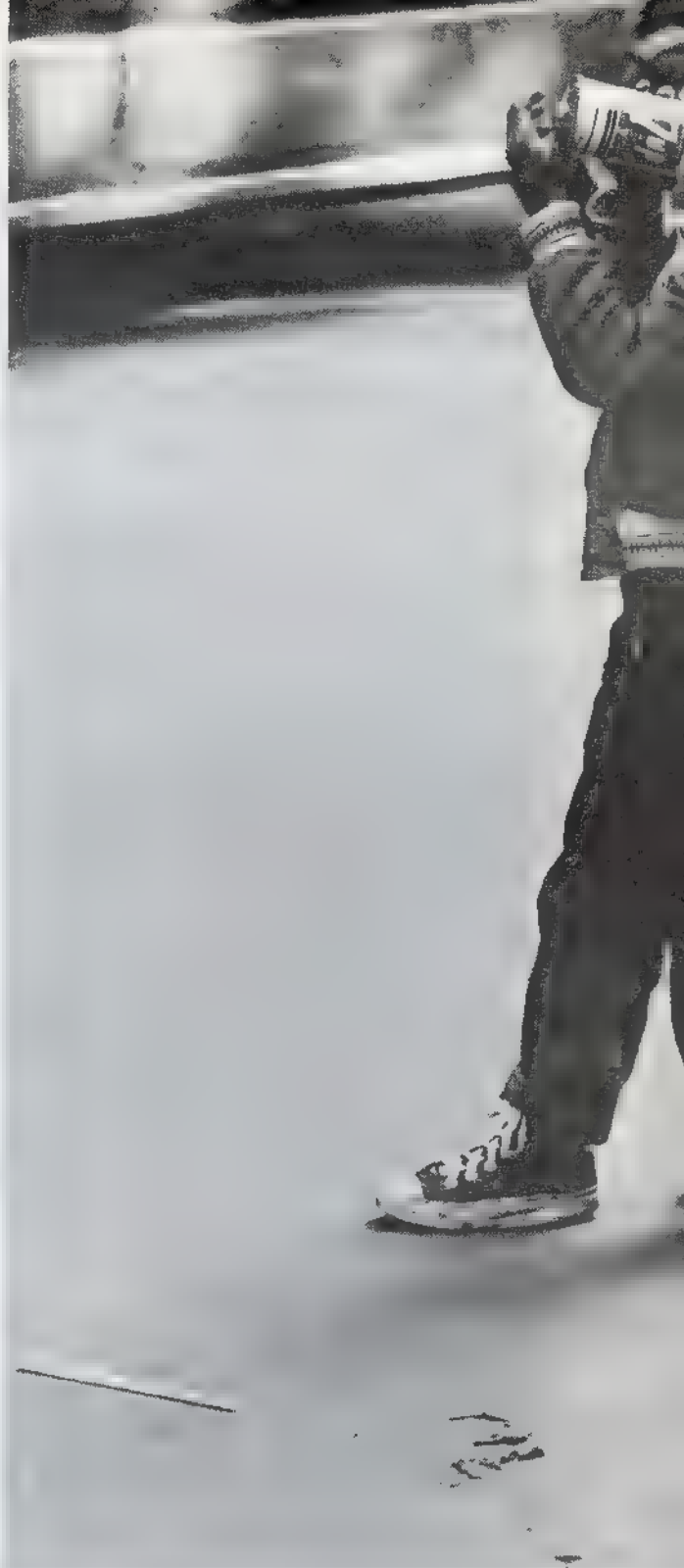
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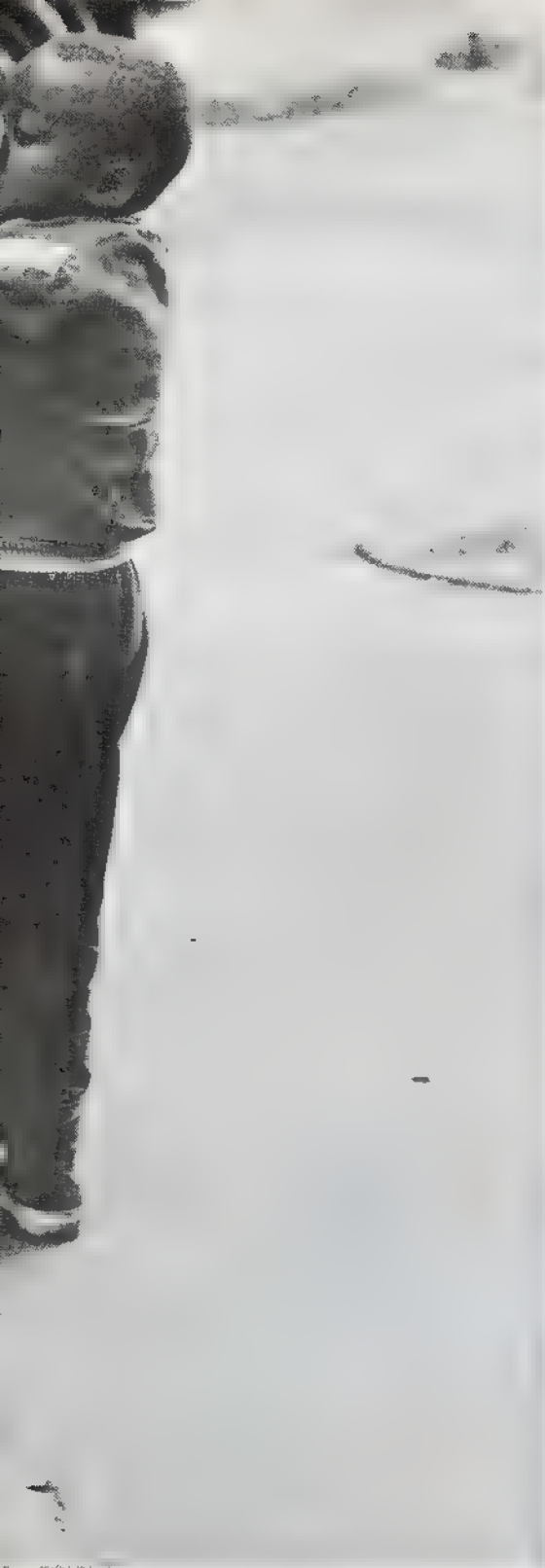
Exposure 1 125 sec at F5.6



Exposure 1/50

CAMERA: Nikon F
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FILM: Tri-X

Photographer: C. Hermes Baillou



sec at F4.



Exposure 1/500 sec at F5.6



Exposure 1/250 sec at F4.

Exodus: Black Zionism

by J. K. Obatala

The Vicksburg wharf, from which many Afro-Americans departed for the "freedom lands."



The Exodus (often called the "Great Exodus") of Blacks to Kansas was a spontaneous, nationalist-agrarian movement which reached its peak in the late 1870's. Historically, it was simply a continuation of the constant flow of Black emigrants and runaway slaves making their way out of the South to the North -- or some other land of hope -- throughout the slave period. But Black emigration prior to that of the Exodus had been driven more by the will and determination of the individual than by any social momentum. It was only when several social, political and economic factors combined after the fall of the slave regimes to create an explosive atmosphere of unrest and discontent among Blacks that the mass phenomenon called the Exodus was born.

The first of these factors was

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Black Agrarianism. The Black man emerged from slavery with a passionate desire to own land, a desire which was to be frustrated over and over again as whites hoarded the land in the South and as the "radical" Republicans refused to initiate meaningful land reforms. (Instead, Southern lands which had been confiscated were returned to the former owners -- the slave-owning aristocracy.)

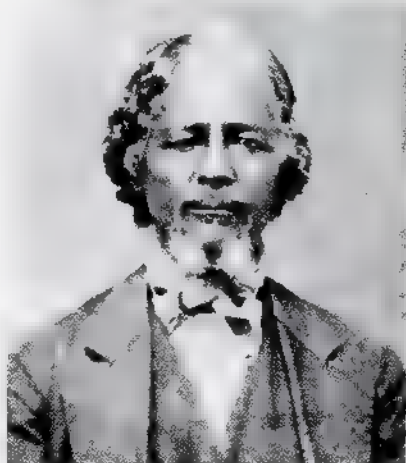
The second factor was the opposition by the Southern establishment to the idea of Black education. This flew in the face of the freedman, who believed that education and the acquisition of technical skills were essential if he were ever to become self-supporting. But the Southerners, convinced that educated Blacks would be a threat to the status quo, refused to give in. Not only were funds not appropriated to finance educational programs, but whites -- upon whom Blacks were largely dependent for instructors -- were prohibited from teaching freedmen.

Then, towards the close of the 1860's, conservative Democrats began a fanatical drive to regain political power in the South -- a drive which culminated in the Compromise of 1877 and the overthrow of the Reconstruction governments. This period of "Redemption" was one of unchecked violence, terror, bloodshed and suffering from which Afro-Americans enjoyed no protection under the law. In addition, there loomed the question of Post-Civil War economics. The South was in the throes of an economic depression. Victimized by the oppressive credit system, the masses of landless, uneducated plantation workers bore the brunt of the suffering and economic hardships that characterized the area. Yet Southerners seemed indifferent to the plight of Black plantation workers and made no serious attempts to alleviate their anguish.

A general feeling of unrest and instability steadily intensified among freedmen until, by the turn of the decade, all of the oppressive and disruptive forces which shaped their lives were transformed into a crude,

mass-based ideology of zionistic, racial nationalism. Black people began to feel more and more that the fate of the Black race lay in its own hands. A group of community leaders thus met at Richmond, Virginia, in 1875 and issued the following call for self-help and self-improvement:

The following startling facts should be sufficient to...prove that your own hands, your own energies, and genius must eventually lift you from the difficulties and embarrassments with which you are surrounded. You constitute five hundred thousand (nearly half) of the population of your state. You have no press! and whatever sentiments you may hold... are almost totally unknown.... Many prob-



Benjamin "Pap" Singleton

lems present themselves and it is as clear as sunshine that you yourselves, and not others, are competent to offer a beneficial solution. (1)

Another symbol of the rising tide of Black Nationalist sentiment was the public protest issued to President Hayes by the Young Men's Progressive Association of Louisiana which closed with a call for Black unity:

We advise the colored men to set aside their personal differences in this solemn hour of our existence and turn over a clean leaf in salutation of the dawn of a new era, which pleads for harmony, unity and cordiality. (2)

But the most dynamic expression of the nationalist imperative was

embodied in the person of Moses "Pap" Singleton, who, along with Henry Adams and other Black Zionists, translated the mood of the masses into an omnipotent program of emigration and colonization. Born a slave at Nashville, Tennessee, in 1809, Singleton escaped slavery and fled to Canada where he remained until 1865 when he returned to his former home. A carpenter by trade, uneducated, and with an ingrained contempt for politicians, Singleton was to become the first great mass leader in Black history after the Civil War, setting a pattern, and even employing a rhetoric, that would be repeated in the twentieth century by Marcus Garvey and other Black Nationalist leaders.

The basis of Singleton's ideology of racial nationalism was economics:

His experiences in the North opened his eyes to the economic weaknesses and dangers of his race, and soon he began to complain that the blacks were profiting little by freedom. They had personal liberty but no homes, and they were often hungry...and were frequently cheated. (3)

Singleton had absolute confidence in the virtues of thrift and wise investment. He urged his fellow Blacks to save and invest their money, to buy homes and small plots of land as the first step towards achieving economic independence.

Singleton began to attract large numbers of followers toward the close of the 1860's. By this time, the hope of acquiring "forty acres and a mule" in the South was receding further and further into the distance while, concurrently, rumors of free land in the West were widespread. These conditions probably contributed to the ease with which Singleton convinced a group of Black people in 1869 that they should "quit renting and farming on the credit system and endeavor to secure homes of their own." (4)

It was at this time also that the first organizational structure emerged at Nashville in the form of the Tennessee Real Estate and Homestead Association. Its purpose was to aid

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EXODUS cont.

Afro-Americans in the acquisition of land and houses. Local chapters were formed which held meetings in Black churches and Masonic Halls. Committees were established to look out for available land and distribute information among Blacks concerning the committees' findings. However, the inability of Black people to purchase land at the high prices asked by the white owners condemned the project to failure.

The failure of the Tennessee Association impressed upon Singleton the stern realization that Blacks--if they were to survive--had to separate themselves from whites. The competition between the two was too grossly unequal, he decided. "The whites had the lands and the sense an' the blacks had nothin' but their freedom...." (5) Singleton then came to the conclusion that the only way the destiny of the Black race could be liberated from the stranglehold of Southern oppression was through emigration. A committee was accordingly organized in 1869 and sent to investigate the feasibility of migrating to Kansas:

They hastily viewed a few of the eastern towns...and saw the conditions of those of their race, who for from five to fifteen years had preceded them, from Missouri. (6)

The committee's report was favorable and by 1873 Singleton had led his first group of 300 followers out of the South.

Black Zionism was also on the rise in the Mississippi Valley Region. As early as 1874, Henry Adams was enrolling plantation workers in his Colonization Councils. In the West, Adams taught, there awaited open lands. There, Blacks could have their own state, free of competition from whites. Adams' brand of Black Nationalism apparently appealed to freedmen of the Mississippi Valley Region, for by 1878 he estimated that between 40,000 and 98,000 Black people had enrolled in his Colonization Councils. (7)

Singleton, Adams and other Black Zionist leaders walked, talked, ate and slept among the people. They were apostles of promise, preaching the fiery gospel of Black salvation in the West: Free land! Cheap land! Schools! Jobs! The news traveled through the towns, valleys and droning swamps to every plantation shack. The South became Egypt and the advocated emigration inspired in the minds of oppressed freedmen tantalizing visions of Canaan. Circulars were circulated, and agitators agitated. The smith, the plow-boy and the maid alike received with glee the soul-stirring message of hope that fell from the lips of the Black Zionist. The dark clouds of chaos and confusion, of agony and frustration, that had been hovering over the South since the end of the Civil War were now whipped into a raving tempest of human desperation. Black hordes, flocks of destitute workers--men, women and children--made their way to the banks of the Mississippi River; the Mississippi was the Jordan and as soon as the river-boat came, they were crossing over. Led on by the vague notion of finding "forty acres and a mule" at the end of "some insubstantial rainbow," Black farmers stopped their plows in the field, packed what they could on their backs, and sold the rest or left it behind:

Many...broke their contracts, sold their cabins and wanted out with all the rest of the flock who had Western fever. They were spending what little they possessed and many would soon reach a point near unto starvation. (8)

Most would suffer and many would die. But they kept leaving. They left from the cotton fields of Georgia and Mississippi, from the cane fields of Louisiana and the mills of Alabama, from Tennessee, Texas, Florida and the Carolinas. They left in large crowds, small crowds, or alone. Where were they going? Where was this new North-Star-in-the-West whose

magnetism drew so irresistibly upon the iron hopes of a destitute people?

**I's going from de cotton fields,
I's going from de cane,
I's going from de ole log hut dat
stands down in de lane;
De boat am in de ribber dat hab
come to take me off,
I's gone and jined de 'Exodus'
dats making far de norf.
Dey tell me out in Kansas, dats
so many miles away,
De colored folks am flocking,
cause dey're getting better pay.
I don't know how I'll find it dar,
but I is bound to try,
So when de sun goes down to-
night, I's going to say good-by. (9)**

Kansas! They were going to Kansas! Some would go to Indiana, some to Nebraska, Canada and as far away as California, but the majority went to Kansas. Kansas was the "Promised Land," the land where each man could exercise his birthright, where each could reap the benefits of his own labor, where each could work and live on the land and enjoy the fruits thereof. It was a land of peace. Then too, there was the mystifying legacy of John Brown, the great fighter for the cause of the Black man's freedom, who had lived and walked on Kansas soil.

Though freedmen had been arriving in Kansas since 1869, the great majority came in 1878-79. The first large group--from Madison Parish in Louisiana--landed in February, 1879. By March 19th, roughly 15,000 Blacks had landed in St. Louis, and in early April the *Fannie Lewis* docked at Wyandotte with two barges loaded with 1,000 Black emigrants from Nashville, Tennessee. The latter were under the leadership of Isaiah Montgomery--the founder of the Black town of Mount Bayou, Mississippi. The people of Wyandotte objected, but Corvine Patterson--a Black constable--and W.J. Buchan--a white state senator--took up the cause. A portion of these emigrants went to Topeka to the Black community of Tennessee Town, while others went to South Topeka and established the Black colony of Mud-Town. (10)

Still others from this group crossed the Kaw River and went into North Topeka and founded another Black community called Redmonville.

The largest Black colony to emerge out of the Westward migration movement was Nicodemus. Samuel Garland, its founder, was born in Holy Springs, Mississippi, in 1817 and was brought to Arkansas by his master at the age of four. He later joined forces with Reverend Silas Lee, Randall Smith, Lewis and Henry Williams, and their families, and in 1878 they founded Nicodemus. Founded on government land, the fee for membership in the colony was assessed at \$5.00, which entitled the subscriber to any vacant lot on the town site.

Nicodemus derived its name from a legendary character who allegedly came to America on a slave ship and then bought his freedom. According to Lee Ella Blake, Black workers sang his praise:

Nicodemus was a slave of African birth,
And was bought for a bag of gold,
He was reckoned as a part of the salt of the earth,
And he died years ago very old.

Nicodemus was a prophet, at heart he was wise,
For he told of the battles to come,
Now he trembled with fear when he rolled up his eyes
And he heeded the shake of his thumb.

Residents of the colony established two newspapers, a hotel, two general stores, a bank, a drugstore and other businesses before the community began its decline and the population drifted away. (11)

The colonization efforts of the Black migrationists were at the same time the product and the victim of American history. For both the slave system and the rural economics which the South inherited from it had dictated that bondsmen and freedmen alike be kept ignorant and be allowed to develop only those skills that were absolutely necessary for the performance of assigned tasks. A very small nucleus of skilled Black artisans and tradesmen did

emerge, but these, because of their privileged status in the Southern caste system, did not emigrate in large enough numbers to provide the colonization movement with the class of skilled men it needed to sustain itself. This ignorance, this lack of specific skills--a cruel yoke clamped around the Black man's neck by the 250 years of slavery and constant dehumanization--proved fatal to the Black emigrants' gallant attempts to achieve economic and political independence.

Coming from the semi-tropical Deep South, the freedmen had little knowledge of Northern and Western agriculture, much less capital and farming equipment. (12) Federal and other agencies which had given financial and material aid to white Westward migration efforts ignored the Blacks. Senator Windom, a Republican from Minnesota, introduced a resolution to investigate the possibilities of encouraging Black migration, but the bill was defeated and the matter dropped. (13)

Thus, the hope of these nationalists, like so many other Black expectations, dissipated in the face of the economic, political and social realities of the nineteenth century. Racial ties were stronger than those of class or nationality. The American government as well as the economic establishment were white--which meant that European immigrants could be more at home here than native-born Black Americans. The colonization efforts of the freedmen, except for a few individual cases, could never have risen above the struggle for mere subsistence without the knowledge, skills, and aid that was readily available to their white counterparts.

- (1) "The Call For A Colored Convention In Virginia," *New York Times*, April 12, 1875.
- (2) Resolution, adopted by the Young Men's Progressive Association of Louisiana, published in the *New York Times*, January 2, 1879.
- (3) Walter L. Fleming, "'Pap' Singleton, The Moses of the Colored Exodus," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 15, July 1909-May 1910.

(4) *Ibid.*, p. 63.

(5) *Ibid.*, p. 64.

(6) F. W. Giles, *Thirty Years In Topeka*. Topeka: G. W. Crane, 1886, p. 368.

(7) John G. Van Deusen, "The Exodus of 1879," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XXI, 1936

(8) From the *Nashville Banner*, March 5th, 1875. (Reprinted in the *New York Times*, March 8, 1875.)

(9) Lee Ella Blake, *The Great Exodus of 1879 and 1880 to Kansas*, an unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History and Government, Kansas State College, 1942, p. 16.

(10) Roy Garvin, "Benjamin, or 'Pap,' Singleton and His Followers," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. XXXIII, 1948, pp. 13-14.

(11) Corine Hare Williams, *The Migration of Negroes to the West: 1877-1900, with Special Reference to Kansas*, an unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, Howard University, 1944.

(12) Henry King, "A Year Of The Exodus In Kansas," *Scribner's Monthly*, Vol. XX, 1880, p. 215.

(13) Rayford W. Logan, *The Betrayal of the Negro: From Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson*. New York: The Macmillan Co., pp. 132-146.

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News in Brief

A UN FIRST: Miss Angie E. Brooks, Assistant Secretary of State of Liberia, is elected President of the 24th General Assembly.

united nations



united nations

President Nixon (l) and UN Secretary-General U Thant (r) congratulate Miss Brooks (c).



THE NIGGER BIBLE, by Robert H. deCoy. Los Angeles: Holloway House Publishing Co., 1967. 304pp. 95¢.

This curious book burst onto the scene about two years ago and its popularity has not diminished. It is "curious" for several reasons, all of which seem to fit well into the schemata of some kind of weird logic. When the book was first released, the name deCoy triggered me to suspect anything; nevertheless, the author is for real, having been born in New Orleans and now a well-known commentator in West Coast media circles. Another curiosity is that deCoy's *Nigger Bible* is part of a Holloway House "adult reading" catalog of predominantly sex-themed literature of various sorts.

Whatever the surrounding circumstances, deCoy has compiled a carefully considered but hastily written alternative to the Old Testament, in which he challenges Judeo-Christian concepts and then rejects them for a Black Concept-of-God. Furthermore, this new testament justifies the term "Nigger" as opposed to "Negro" which, as deCoy writes, "will never become a reality. Your Being as a Nigger is closest to your inherent Black nature."

In rewriting the Old Testament, deCoy suggests that the New Testament be rewritten by the present Black-kind or their descendants. Prior to the Word came the Experience -- the first Copulation -- vividly told. A "First Dictionary of Nigrite Words" is provided. Separation in mind and spirit into autonomous political communities is advocated. Although one of the major theses in *The Nigger Bible* is "what the Nigger needs most is a God," deCoy rejects the program of Elijah Muhammad and considers the Black Christ concept of Albert Cleage to be absurd -- he rejects the latter's identity with Israel.

DeCoy's "proverbs" and his description of Mardi Gras ("National Observance of the Nigger Dream") are perhaps his testament's two more valuable sections. The proverbs are for discipline in the Black-kinds' daily spiritual, socio-political, and cultural outlook and survival. Mardi Gras and its Zulu King are the truest expression of Black reality. Rounding out the *Bible* are parables illustrating the temptations and responses of the Black psyche.

Dick Gregory's preface notes deCoy as a contemporary literary giant, which he ain't. He would surely be the real *decoy* amidst Baraka, Kelley, Williams, Reed, Bennett, and Cruse, and Gregory ought to know that. Muddy *literary logistics* are the result of muddy writing, which the *Nigger Bible* does have. Addressing his teachings to "My Nigger Son" or "My Nigger Children," deCoy's epistolary rap is a tongue-in-cheek mixture of Soul talk and 17th-century scriptural prose. As his parables and dramas attest, he is only a fair storyteller; yet his story context, especially the Mardi Gras sequence, is good meat for someone else.

We may not agree with deCoy's generalizations or with the way in which he arrives at some of his conclusions. But *The Nigger Bible* is honest; and it is also as "sensational" as deCoy would have us believe.

--Ron Welburn

BLACK THEOLOGY AND BLACK POWER, by James H. Cone. New York: The Seabury Press, 1969. 176 pp. \$2.95

When James Forman strode up the aisle of the Riverside Church in New York City and delivered his ultimatum on reparations due from the churches, or when he visited the Madison Avenue offices of the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, he might well have presented his intimidated

listeners with a copy of *Black Theology and Black Power*. The book just might help these Christians remember what the main man they sing about and read about had to say about the human situation.

James Cone does not arrogantly -- try to make Christians of Black Power advocates, but he does effectively accomplish what he sets out to do: "to show that the goal and message of Black Power...is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ." He defines Black Power as "the complete emancipation of black people from white oppression by whatever means black people deem necessary."

Currently, religious organizations are expending a good deal of money putting their clergy through sensitivity training in hopes of stemming the wholesale exodus of functionaries from the clerical ranks. It is not working because the institution itself is not changing. Cone takes the fundamental terminology of Martin Buber which underlies this popular movement -- the "I-Thou" relationship -- and clearly shows that Christianity in its organized form has fostered the "I-It" relationship to Black people from the days when Bishops poured the waters of Baptism over Black men being rowed out to ships for the middle passage till the present hour when Church resources are expended on irrelevancies and luxuries while human beings are being destroyed on big city streets. To love the white man "the black man confronts him as a Thou" and in doing so must "be prepared for conflict." The white man, the white Christian and his institutions have treated Black people as things for so long, one has to wonder if they will ever change. Jesus "lost his cool" more than once when he saw religion being used as an instrument of oppression of poor people. He destroyed property after they laughed off his words.

cont. on pg. 23



MOTHER AFRICA | TANZANIA

by CLAYTON RILEY

"...whitey isn't even safe from himself."

"This," says a character in the film, *Easy Rider*, "this used to be a hell of a good country." Out of context such a statement would amuse me -- I mean I would have to laugh at this, you know.

The film works less often than not, struggles through some terribly maudlin moments, is trite, tries too hard, loses itself in commentary that frequently offers no clue to statement or clarity. But... all this being true, the American cinema is richer for this picture, and so, friends, are we.

Across a dying, agonized nation rides Captain America, played listlessly by Peter Fonda, scarcely aware, it frequently appears, of his own sensibilities, let alone those of his co-motorcyclist, the reincarnation of all buffalo-hunting aristocrats, the weird, freaked-out fellow traveler named Billy (played by Dennis Hopper, who also directed). They have scored with junk sale -- big bucks for some happy dust -- and are headed for New Orleans and the Mardi Gras, riding above a chrome and rubber feast into a carefully selected horizon. They will encounter the United States, all that it stands for and all the people who maniacally oppose any change in the syndrome of oppression that has characterized this life, who are prepared to support at any cost the nature of their own exclusion from the narrow and exclusive corridors of this nation's precious sense of freedom. "That's what it's all about, ain't it?" Billy wonders. "You get the money and you're free."

The special squalor of America is its fabled dream which is matched only by its beauty, a beauty that defines itself necessarily out of an untouched wilderness where man has not had time or the inclination to destroy. As the riders ease through the Southwest, the land that must have visually overwhelmed so many ancient men is available to us, a vast panorama of hill and flatland, proudly stated mountains and an end-

less greenery rolling to meet itself and the falling edges of the sky. And in this dreamy, sentimental journey to the end of all things, we are witness to the naivete that resides, in fact, within all of us who live here; for one is surely naive who confronts this nation daily... unarmed, unprepared... as we all are who still are here looking, listening for the beginning of the government's humanity.

Easy Rider has a quality of the child's belief in essential goodness, the sense that in each bend of our daily road a lemonade stand will rise from dust, a Santa Claus will rush to greet us, a Jesus waits to protect us from the night and our misguided foes.

So forceful is the dynamic of the Christian ethic, that the mythology attending this work is a continued longing for a goodness that consumes evil, for retribution and that enormous commitment to a strange, unrelenting and extended crucifixion. Death haunts all action -- as it always does, always has -- and regular suggestions of menace, a pervasive quality of dread, travel intimately with these reluctant and, finally, wretched heroes.

There is, on the first night of their clearly hopeless sojourn, no room at an inn (at a seedy, crumbling motel, in reality); so we are aware early on that all manner of biblical significance is implied. (Only much later will we say, shamelessly: why not?)

They will come upon a samaritan, as well, who offers them rest and rejuvenation for one of their iron beasts of burden -- who will, in addition, break his bread with them.

They will journey with a stranger to the stranger's "land," there to discover that life is more than love, more than communal sharing, more than a consuming desire for peace... for life.

There is, they will conclude, no peace beyond what is imagined, past what is in the region of our mind's eye, all youthful hopes.

None of it real.

...an odyssey shaped by the music of the day it takes place, and by the mover, the great pretender, the assistant to many of our desires to escape these things we see, we remember.... Shaped by the hard weed of reveries and visions we can live with this side of screaming endlessly, falling through our broken skin... gangster grass meeting the needs of so many candidates for standing room in stations of the dead...

In jail, the two discover a bleeding soul, dressed as an alcoholic lawyer (Jack Nicholson, whose portrayal becomes a brilliantly realized echo of the nation's fractured, frightened heart, all tragic humor, all sad-eyes-as-receptacles-of-doom gathered in him, pouring slowly out, revealing the frail appearance, the killing weight of false hope.

These components converging into madness, rages that rely for their existence upon an absence of the spirit, violence that depends on nothing in America but space and time... each of these wrestling with cinematic device and excesses that are somehow forgivable in the end when the why of these things must not be explained but felt if we are to know anything for having watched.

And I look at America walk from the movie house, walk away from an end to a film that blows the open mind, watch them walk out smiling in that self-conscious way only Uncle Sam's children can effect to hide the touching of their nerves, the grin that chokes all chance of weeping. And recognizing that these white boys and girls are not going to let themselves cry for the smashed innocence of their own heroes -- stark reflection of nothing less than their own odds-on potential for loss, their future deaths -- aware of this, I weep then for the watchers.

Grim waiting rooms, indoors and out-places where the moment should express the final knowledge that whitey isn't even safe from himself. Words ought to express this, and images... but don't.

Silence, then, and sorrow from the *Easy Rider*... and for him.

Letters to the Editor

How Black Is Black?

Dear Sir:

One of the unfortunate inheritances acquired by many Westernized people of African descent from their European exploiters is *arrogant stupidity*. Why don't we stop this myth about being "pure African" when we know that the majority of Afro-Americans are mixtures to one degree or another of both Black (African) and white (European)? Don't try to tell me that Adam Clayton Powell Jr., Joe Louis, Lena Horne, Muhammed Ali, Dr. Charles Drew, Walter White, Richard Wright, Huey Newton, Julian Bond, Eldridge Cleaver, etc., are of "pure African blood."

I am a Barbadian American who possesses African ancestors. I mourn for my African ancestors within and seek not to overtly desecrate their dignified memory. But their world is not my world, therefore I would not dare to masquerade as what I am not: an African who has retained his original culture. About ninety percent of the population in Barbados is of African descent, yet we do not claim to exclusively possess an African culture. I can only say as did Jacques Roumain, a poet born on the island of Martinique, "I have kept your memory Africa, you are in me."

DeCourcy Edwards
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The Wild Bunch

Dear Sirs:

Clayton Riley's movie review of *The Wild Bunch* (LIBERATOR, August 1969) says that it is "...the most racist depiction of the Mexican people to appear on any screen in twenty years." That is untrue, for the only decent and humane people in the entire movie are a band of Mexican revolutionaries, Indians, who are above the level of the reactionary Mexican generals of the 1910's, and certainly superior to the personal-greed bank robber and mercenary soldier level of the American soldiers and outlaws.

It is not racist to portray the Mexican generals as selfish men, for they were, and they, not the revolutionaries, are still ruling Mexico. (Note the pre-Olympics massacre.)

However, most movie audiences probably did not "get the message" that the Indians were the good guys, and as Riley hinted, they probably viewed the movie as a good blood and guts flick.

I am not sure what is needed: less movies which have a message, but which pander mainly to the audience's love of violence; or more movies of the same, but with much more education on the nature of the media and the themes with which it deals. And, maybe the above points are worthless anyway. Only a genuinely revolutionary society can produce the films and audiences (and critics) to achieve a decent cinema

Eugene Novogrodsky
Takoma Park, Maryland

Marxism and the Black Revolution

Dear Editor:

It was interesting to read the revisionist Mr. Songha (September 1969) writing that "history has taught us that there are two different causes of classes in a given society--unequal wealth distribution, and racism." Two causes? Nothing could be further from the truth. Racism has *historically* been used to justify one class's "right" to use another at will to further its aims. Capitalism (or ownership of property) was/is a mark of distinction to point out differences and to establish so-called "rights" and class stratification. Once these "rights" are determined, simultaneously the institutions or justifications upon which to found them must be brought forward. Racism is only a *justification* for the brutal utilization of nonwhites to further the aims of capitalism.

To say that racism is a causal agent of class is like saying that revolution is the cause of capitalism. One cannot talk of class unless one talks of the "invidious" distinctions separating them. And so-called

"race" is not such a determinant; it is *only* a subterfuge, merely a tool --and a handy one at that.

Witness the recent Chicago and Pittsburgh labor strife (as well as that in the entire building and trades industry). The white working class utilizes reaction (racism) to maintain their closed unions... closed to Afro-Americans, that is. They find reaction to be a useful tool simply because it is to the advantage of the ruling class. The ruling class cannot afford to let the white workers hamper their profiteering and reduce their dwindling holdings throughout the entire world; therefore, the rulers *must*, out of sheer necessity, *encourage* racism to divide the Black and white working classes. Otherwise the working class *as a whole* becomes a potential and deadly threat.

Furthermore, Mr. Songha, can the upper-class Afro-American (exploiter) "share camp" with the lower-class (exploited) Afro-American? Just who gives these Black exploiters their status? Those they "share camp with," of course. Why? Because these Black upper and middle classes do not control the means of production or natural resources as do their white counterparts, and therefore, they must exploit the lower-class Afro-Americans. Now it stands to reason that if some of them are, in fact, upper-class, they reached this level by bilking their own ethnic group -- an act facilitated by the racism inherent in a capitalistic system. And, if this is true, they not only use racism, as do other capitalists, but they have "a good thing going for them" and consequently they need *not* fight against being "sealed"... or for a "classless society."

I agree, Mr. Songha, we need not "dilly-dally with ideologies," such as revisionism of the sort for which the SWP is famous. We need to employ an ideology to analyze the so-called "Black revolution"... preferably one like Hegelian dialectics as seen by Messrs. Marx & Engels.

Dexter P. Jackson
New York City

So too, "violence may be the black man's expression, sometimes the only possible expression, of Christian love to the white oppressor."

All the pious protestations of white religionists of their veneration for Martin Luther King, Jr., Cone says, are base hypocrisy. "...most whites 'loved' Martin Luther King, Jr., not because of his attempt to free his people, but because his approach was the least threatening to the white power structure. Thus churchmen and theologians grasped at the opportunity to identify with him so that they could keep blacks powerless and simultaneously appease their own guilt about white oppression."

Cone deals in understanding fashion with the Black Church, tracing its historical development and showing how, after the Civil War, it became one of the chief perpetrators of the white system of Black dehumanization. (See *LIBERATOR*, May 1969, "The Failure of the Black Church," for a condensation of this material.)

No doubt, the ordinary reader who picks up this book will think that it will all end up happily. But Cone is no optimist. He concludes one section of his book with no hope at all for renewal of the institutions of Christianity, charging both the white and Black churches in America with having "taken the road marked 'the good life,'" with having supported and encouraged racism and bigotry, with having become the embodiment of what is wrong with American society.

I don't suppose so pessimistic a forecast will daunt James Forman -- who seems, in view of his demands, more certain that the Church will stay around -- but one can hope that so honest and realistic a forecast as this one by Cone will wake up the professional followers of Jesus, Black and white.

--Rev. Daniel J. Mallette

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